

**Name of disorder: Migraine**

**Essay Title: Migraine – one day of many**

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## **Content**

Anna, 42 years old, lives a typical suburban modern life. She cares for her two children and works four days a week. Like many of her peers, she experiences migraine. Here, we capture one day in Anna's life. Unfortunately, it is not one of her better days, but describes a regular feature in her life.

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"Let's go people." Trying to stir my kids into action to get to school and work on time is chaos. Lunchboxes packed, sports gear organized, and now Mia tells me that she needs to have a fairy costume for a rehearsal for dance class today. I can't wait to get in the car to regroup for a few minutes. Today's schedule consists of dropping kids at school, back-to-back meetings at work, ferrying Mia to dance class, then James to soccer. I'm trying to ignore a nagging sense of fatigue. I simply don't have time to deal with it.

My computer screen at work is filled with columns of numbers. Key staff contracts are due for renewal but I can't seem to concentrate on the paperwork. A small patch of haze appears in my central vision – the first sign of an impending migraine. This is the third time in recent months. I really don't want to leave work early again. My colleagues are supportive but I can't help sensing an undercurrent of misunderstanding. If only it was "just a headache."

I can't drive. I hope Paul doesn't have any key commitments at his work and can come and pick me up. I have a safe window of about an hour before the bathroom and I become close friends. Please let the traffic be friendly. The moving car and nausea is a lethal combination.

Ringin' mum again. "Sorry Mum, but I have had to leave work and I really don't think I can get to school to collect the kids. James has soccer after school and Mia dance classes. Thanks so much for taking them."

Hiding in my cave. So tired, so painful. Big, beautiful brown eyes of disappointment peek around the door. "You didn't see me score my first goal."

So much missed.

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Migraine is the most common neurological disorder affecting the Australian community. Migraine primarily affects people aged between 18 and 50 years and has a profound impact on affected individuals and their communities, families

and workplaces. The World Health Organisation lists migraine as one of the top 20 causes of disability of all conditions worldwide. Many people with migraine do not manage their attacks well, in part because of difficulties in predicting attack onset. The goal of our research is to develop a low-cost portable vision test that people can use to assist in the prediction of their next migraine. Our approach uses vision testing, as it is known that visual perception can change with changes in brain reactivity. We are hopeful that such simple tests may result in immediate improvements in the life of many individuals like Anna.

\*Anna is a fictitious representative migraine sufferer created from the stories of many people we have interviewed in the course of our research over the past decade. While the features of Anna's story will resonate with the experience of many people with migraine, particular resemblance to any specific individual is accidental.